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TAGS: PREL IZ
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS UNAMI SRSG TO DISCUSS A
"NORMALIZATION FRAMEWORK" FOR DIBS

Classified By: Political Counselor Yuri Kim for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The Ambassador and UNAMI SRSG Melkert agreed February 6 to work together to create a robust new impetus for settlement of Iraq's disputed internal boundaries (DIBs) following the March 7 election. The USG and UNAMI will work to establish a broad-based "normalization process" (term drawn from Article 140) to engage all the ethnic and religious groups, as well as the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the federal government in Baghdad, in a network of interactions calculated to address near-term issues of governance and security while also working toward a final political solution with the broadest possible buy-in. UNAMI and Embassy Baghdad will continue fleshing out the concept over coming weeks, and UNAMI will initiate low-key, informal consultations with the major political parties and blocs following the election. UNAMI and the USG will also assist the GOI in conducting a national census, although this is unlikely to be politically feasible before 2011. END SUMMARY.

RENEWED FOCUS ON ARTICLE 140 AND DIBS SETTLEMENT

¶2. (C) On February 6, Ambassador and UNAMI SRSG Ad Melkert met to discuss a way forward on Iraq's disputed internal boundaries (DIBs). It was agreed that the Embassy and UNAMI will work together over coming months to engage the key parties, including all the ethnic and religious groups, as well as the KRG and the Baghdad central government, in a significant new push following the March 7 election. The aim will be to create a broad-based, inclusive process under the rubric of "normalization," the first phase envisaged by Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution. UNAMI will begin informal consultations with the major parties and political blocs shortly after the election, but before completion of the government formation process. The consultations will be calculated to obtain the broadest political buy-in by showing a "glimpse" of the envisioned "normalization process," and inviting substantive input and cooperation. The Ambassador and SRSG agreed that, in order to encourage frank discussion and minimize political maneuvering by political parties early on, launch of the consultations will not/not be announced as a new effort.

NORMALIZATION FRAMEWORK

¶3. (C) The fundamental aim of the normalization process will be to create a forward-looking process with multiple lines of effort coordinated so as to engage the political parties, as well as the religious and ethnic groups, in a range of positive interactions that will address short-term issues of governance, decrease tensions, and directly foster progress toward a final political settlement. The Ambassador and SRSG agreed that Kirkuk would be the initial central focus,

although the process will be formulated so as to incorporate all three DIBs provinces: Diyala, Kirkuk, and Ninewa. Existing efforts to address DIBs issues, including internally displaced persons (IDP) resettlement, the land claims process, and the UNAMI-chaired High Level Task Force (HLTF) would all be incorporated into the new framework, possibly with some restructuring. Additional details of the normalization process are to be fleshed out over coming weeks in further interaction between Embassy and UNAMI staff.

¶4. (C) The normalization process -- also incorporating "baskets" of substantive issues (political, social, economic, Q"baskets" of substantive issues (political, social, economic, security, etc.) -- will, taken as a whole, engage stakeholders in a multi-year effort which might resemble the "special status" option identified by UNAMI for Kirkuk. Senior Advisor for Northern Iraq (SANI) argued that, over time, against a backdrop of increasing national revenue as oil exports grow, a normalization process will "in a best-case scenario" evolve naturally toward a final outcome acceptable to all. The SRSG agreed that, while it would be unrealistic to expect 100% consensus, such a normalization process will offer the best chance to achieve broad buy-in to a practical outcome.

¶5. (C) The Ambassador emphasized the need to incorporate in the normalization process a strong economic development plan, which capitalizes fully on the rising provincial budget allocations projected for coming years, especially in Kirkuk.

The SRSG and the Ambassador agree that UNAMI and the USG will need to remain fully engaged over coming years to knit together a coherent normalization process and help the Iraqi participants both to overcome difficulties as they arise and to keep sight of long-term objectives.

NATIONAL CENSUS

¶6. (C) The SRSG noted UNAMI is prepared to assist the GOI in conducting a national census as early as October 2010, although all agreed that it was unlikely, given expected political developments, that Iraq will be ready to proceed by that time. The Ambassador reiterated the USG's commitment to provide technical assistance for a census. SANI pointed out that the new government will have to address a number of politically sensitive questions about the methodology and scope of the census before a date can be set. It was agreed that the census should be one of the topics of the informal meetings with political coalitions.

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